

THEMATIC STRUCTURE AND FOREGROUNDING IN SELECTED EXTRACTS

FROM ADETUNJI OGUNDIMU'S *A SILLY SEASON*

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ABSTRACT

The metafunctional approach developed by the Systemic Functional Linguistics is a theory commonly used for the analysis of texts. The importance of this linguistic tool is that it helps to find out how language functions and is used in a cultural and situational context. This paper focused on an aspect of textual meaning, which is realized through Theme patterns. It attempted to analyze the language of Adetunji Ogundimu's *A Silly Season*. The findings revealed that there is a predominance of topical unmarked and textual Themes in the selected excerpts of the novel under study. In addition, other Theme-types such as topical marked, interpersonal Themes and marked dependent clauses are foregrounded to point out some prominent features of these passages of the literary artifact. The work concluded that these foregrounded elements, that is, some thematic features which emphasize the meanings expressed in the selected extracts, also contribute to the understanding of the novel.

KEYWORDS: Systemic Functional Linguistics, Textual Meaning, Theme, Context, Foregrounding

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics, the scientific study of language, is concerned with developing theories that account for and explain the phenomena of spoken and written languages. In this particular field of study, linguists' roles are to describe languages by indicating what they are like and how they function (McGregor, 2009). Actually, one of the most recent and widely used theories is the systemic functional linguistics advanced by Halliday (1973, 1978, 1985a) and developed by scholars such as Hasan (1985/1989), Eggins (1994) and many others. These scholars advocate that language is used to express meanings, viz. experiential, interpersonal and textual. These meanings, known as metafunctions, are realized through the lexico-grammatical features which are: transitivity, mood, and theme.

In written texts, this approach is used, not only to discover the nature and functions of the language, but also to enhance the understanding of these texts. As a matter of fact, this article investigates the language of *A Silly Season*, a novel written by a Nigerian, Adetunji Ogundimu, through the grammar of textual meaning, especially the Theme patterns. The novel focuses on a young teacher, Kunle Bamgbelu, who is appointed Commissioner at the State Secretariat, under the military governor of Ribalia. Unconcerned with the habits of bribery, he later discovers that he is, henceforth, in an environment where it becomes difficult to hold out against corruption. He, then, decides to resign his appointment, which makes his parents and relatives unhappy. *A Silly Season* is, thus, a novel in which the writer attempts to depict the social and political realities of our modern epoch. Therefore, a linguistic analysis based on thematic features aims at finding out how the writer organizes clauses to convey his message.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theme is a component of textual meaning. According to Eggins (1994), textual meaning is the level of organization of the clause which enables the clause to be packaged in ways which make it effective given its purpose and its context. This system of Theme is realized through two main components. Halliday (1985a) says:

We may assume that in all languages the clause has the character of a message: it has some form of organization giving it the status of a communicative event. But there are different ways in which this may be achieved. [...] the clause is organized as a message by having a special status assigned to one part of it. One element in the clause is enunciated as the theme; this then combines with the remainder so that the two parts together constitute a message (p.38).

From the above statement, it appears that Theme is realized through a structure in which the clause falls into just two main constituents. The first one is a Theme, that is, the starting point for the message; it is what the clause is going to be about. This is followed by the realization of the Rheme, which can be explained as being the rest of the message (Bloor and Bloor, 2004). Following Halliday (1985a) and Eggins (1994), different categories of Themes can be identified. These include:

- **Topical Unmarked Theme:** The element of the clause to which transitivity function can be assigned and which occurs in the first position. Bloor and Bloor (2004) say that the topical Theme always represents a participant, circumstance or process and is always realized by subject, predicator, complement or circumstantial adjunct.
- **Topical Marked Theme:** The Theme which is untypical, i.e., anything other than subject which occurs at the beginning of the clause, including circumstantial adjunct, complement and predicator.
- **Interpersonal Theme:** The constituent of the clause to which one can assign a mood label (modal adjunct, comment adjunct, the unfused finite in interrogative structures) and which occurs at the beginning of the clause before the topical Theme.
- **Textual Theme:** The Theme which is realized by textual elements such as continuative and conjunctive elements.
- **Dependent Clause as Theme:** Dependent clause is a clause which is bound to another in a hypotactic relationship (Bloor and Bloor, 2004). Hypotaxis is used to mean the binding of unequal elements where one is dominant and the other dependent. These elements are symbolized as α , β , γ , etc. Actually, dealing with Theme-Rheme structure in these clauses, it is obvious to say that the thematically unmarked sequence is: dominant clause followed by dependent clause: ' α clause followed by β clause'. On the other hand, in the thematic marked sequence, the one to be dealt with in this paper, dependent clause is followed by dominant clause: ' β clause followed by α clause'.

Moreover, the Theme always carries the method of development of texts and the choice of Theme in the clause also has significance in the discourse. Actually, the typical overall sequence of Themes in a clause is: textual followed by interpersonal and topical. When elements which are not obligatory thematic occur in thematic position and preceding the topical Theme, their status as Theme is 'foregrounded' (Halliday, 2002).

As observed by Hasan (1985/1989), the concept of foregrounding originated from the Prague School and it is elaborated by Mukarovsky (1964). According to Leech (1969), a work of art deviates from norms which people, as members of society have learnt to expect in the medium used. Originally, this notion is applied to poetry, but it is later used in every literary genre and even in non-literary writings. Leech says:

Deliberate linguistic foregrounding is not confined to poetry, but it is found, for example, in joking speech and in children games. Literature is distinguished [...] by the consistency and the systematic characteristic of foregrounding, but

even so, in some non-literary writings [...] foregrounding may be just as pervasive and as violent (if not more so) as it is in most poetry. (p.57)

Fowler (1986, p.71), about this concept, thinks that whenever some item or construction appears in a text with unusual or noticeable frequency and apparently for some valid reason, then cumulatively a distinctive effect emerges. Similarly, Simpson (2004) contends that “foregrounding refers to a form of textual patterning which is motivated specifically for literary-aesthetic purposes” (p.50). On her part, Hasan (1985/1989) observes that the concept basic to foregrounding is that of contrast and when it is applied to a text, the contrast is a contrast to the norm of that text. She adds that “we think of something as foregrounded when it stands out against an established tendency” (p.94).

In this paper, the foregrounding of Theme is studied because, as Halliday (2002, p.62) observes, much of the meaning of a text resides in the sort of foregrounding that is achieved by a kind of environmentally motivated prominence, in which certain sets of options are favoured, as a realization of particular elements in the social context. The paper, then, also attempts to point out the patterns which facilitate the study of the style and language of the novel under study.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this study, the data used for analysis are two excerpts selected from the novel, *A Silly Season*, under study. These excerpts (henceforth text 1 and text 2) are chosen because they focus on the major themes developed by the writer Adetunji Ogundimu. In Text 1 the narrator Kunle Bamgbelu has gone to the State Secretariat the day after his swearing ceremony to meet the staff and get used to his new post. Abeji, his girl friend, calls on him and decides to set an agenda for him. This consists in ‘doing something for their friends’, which Kunle does not care for. In text 2, Kunle, after being tempted to receive bribes, feels uncomfortable to remain the State Commissioner. He decides to write a letter of resignation. But Abeji wants to oblige him to change his mind. Indeed, the methodology adopted in this analysis is descriptive and involves both quantitative and qualitative approach (Creswell, 2003). The advantage of this technique, we think, is that it facilitates a meticulous analysis of linguistic features as devised by Halliday's (1978, 1985a) systemic functional linguistics. Therefore, each text is divided into clauses and basing on Eggins's (1994) model of analysis, Theme identification in the two texts is carried out in the appendices.

Theme Analysis

In the course of this analysis, we have attempted to identify the different Themes in each text. So, Theme-identification in both text 1 and text 2 is shown in the appendix. From this data processing, it appears that various Themes have been used in this text. In order to facilitate their appreciation, they have been counted and their numbers with their related percentages have been displayed in table 1 below:

Table 1: Theme-Types in the Texts

Theme-Types	Text 1	Text 2
Topical unmarked	130 (90.27%)	116 (87.87%)
Topical marked	06 (04.16 %)	03 (2.27 %)
Textual	45 (31.25 %)	50 (37.87 %)
Interpersonal	09 (06.25 %)	12 (09.09 %)
Dependent clause as Theme	05 (03.47 %)	06 (04.54 %)
Total/clauses	144 (100%)	132 (100%)

From the above table, one can notice that topical unmarked Theme ranks first in the two texts: [130 (90%)] in text 1 and [116 (87.87%)] in text 2. This shows that these Themes are conflated with subject in declarative clause and predicator in imperative clause and also indicates that concrete, movement, psychological and physiological actions are depicted by the writer in the two passages. Textual Theme ranks second: [45 (31.25%)] in text1 and [50 (37.87 %)], meaning that events are cohesively and coherently described. Indeed, in the two texts, the writer has made use of elements which either serve to link clauses together or indicate that the speaker's contribution is related to what a previous speaker has said in an earlier turn. Topical marked Themes are less predominant than topical unmarked ones: [06 (04.16%)] in text1 and [03 (02.27%)] in text 2. These thematized elements are used to demonstrate that the writer has emphasized some of the events he is describing.

As for interpersonal Themes, they rank third in the selected texts: [09 (06.25%)] in text 1 and [12 (09.09%)] in text2. Nevertheless, their presence is the proof that, at a given stage of his story, the writer has not only displayed his attitudes or evaluated a situation, but he has also provided a dialogic feature to his story. Finally, dependent clauses are also less predominant than interpersonal Themes: [05 (03.47 %)] in text 1 and [06 (04.54 %)] in text 2. Nevertheless, their presence reveals that the writer aims at expressing contingency, constraining the proposition expressed in the dominant clauses (Bloor and Bloor, 2004). Thus, the above table presents a picture of thematic distribution of the texts. Following (Hasan 1985/1989), it can be said that as topical and textual Themes are the most predominant ones, the other categories of Themes (interpersonal, unmarked topical Themes, as well as dependent clauses as Theme) are used by the writer to foreground some aspects of his message. Actually, a further appreciation of these linguistic patterns requires a qualitative analysis of some of those identified.

Topical Unmarked Themes

As said above, topical Themes are the most predominant ones. This first element of the clause has the function of transitivity. It is interpreted as 'what the clause is about' (Halliday, 2002).

In text 1, the most predominant Theme that reoccurs in this text is the narrator, anaphorically referred to as "I". He plays the role of senser (that is, he performs psychological actions related to perception, cognition and affection) in (7, 30, 34, 37, 56, 95, 106, 108, 124, 131, 135), behavior (performing physiological actions in (25, 62), sayer (performing verbal actions) in (32, 33, 35, 37, 50, 75, 85, 101, 120, 139). The narrator, as an actor, has also performed concrete and movement actions in (8, 41, 47, 67, 68, 125, 127, 136). In addition, each of the Rhemes that follows the Thematic "I" stands for the new information given to the reader. This shows that the narrator is really involved in the events he is depicting. The other elements that are used as Themes include the different protagonists of the passage such as "Kayode", a young man from the ministry of works and anaphorically referred to as "he" in clauses (3, 4, 5, 6), Mrs Banji, anaphorically referred to as "she" in (18, 19, 20), Abeji in (43, 44), Abeji and the narrator in (45, 46), "the Governor" in (29), etc. Other elements used as Themes include places such as "Oke-Aleebu" (the State secretariat) in (10), "the governor's office" in (12), "the state ministries" in (13). In addition, there are cases, although very few, where the Theme is conflated with predicator in imperative clauses. These are identified in clauses (65, 93).

Similarly, in text 2, the narrator (anaphorically referred to as "I" or "you"), as well as Abeji, are the most predominant Themes. The narrator plays the actor role in (8, 9, 22, 23, 63, 107, 108, 115), the senser role in (1, 7, 24, 59, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 123), the behavior role in (2, 17, 18), the sayer role in (34, 91, 95, 99), as well as other transitivity roles. Each of the Themes displays new information in the Rhematic part and they provide the reader with. Apart from the

narrator that has been thematized, "Abeji" (also referred to as "she" or "I") is also used as topical Themes and she plays the actor role in (25, 30, 37, 38, 54, 57, 66, 71, 124, 125) and sener role in (40, 48, 50, 51, 121, 127), behavior role in (37, 41, 78), sayer role in (33, 52, 56, 61, 68, 72, 74). Other elements used as Themes include: "Mother" in (28, 29), "Bukky" in (26), the wh-elements in (73, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 111, 118), etc. These topical Themes enable the reader to account for the Field, an element of context of situation (Halliday & Hasan, 1985/1989) of the passage.

Moreover, as observed by Eggins (1994), a very important contribution that Theme makes to the cohesion and coherence of a text has to do with how thematic elements follow each other. This is what she refers to as "the method of development" of Theme. In this respect, the main features of thematic development in these texts include:

- **Theme Re-Iteration:** This is the case where the same element occurs in thematic position. In text 1, the Theme which reiterates more than the other elements is "I" (the narrator). It can be justified by the fact that the latter is the one who is telling the story in the passage. More importantly, this Theme is used in association with other protagonists of the passage in Thematic position, mainly "Mrs Banji", the staff of the ministry, "Abeji", on the one hand, as well as the governor's offices and those of the ministry, on the other. In text 2, the Themes which reiterate is "I"/Kunle" the narrator and Abeji (referred to as "I"/ "she"), associated with other topical Themes such as "Bukky" and "Mother". Other Themes include the wh-elements and imperative clauses in which the Theme is conflated with predicator. This "has the effect of maintaining a strong topical focus in the text while avoiding simple repetition" (Eggins, 1994, p. 303).
- **The Zig-Zag Patterns:** This is the case where an element introduced in the Rheme in the first clause gets promoted to become the Theme of the second clause (Eggins, 1994). Bloor & Bloor (2004) refer to them as "the linear Theme patterns". In this text, we can notice that the zig-zag strategy allows "Mrs Banji" in (17) to be introduced as Theme in (18), "me" (the narrator) in (24, 29), is used as Theme in (25, 30). Similarly, the Rheme in (100) is used as Theme in (101), whereas "me", in (105), is used as Theme in (106). In addition, "Mallam Dogo" in the Rhematic position in (137) is used as Theme in (138).

As for text 2, we can point out, although very few, some cases of zig-zag patterns. In (35), "trip" is introduced in the Rheme and used as Theme in (36). Similarly, "the invitation letter" is used as Theme in (65) and refers back to "a special function or something" which is introduced as Rheme in (64). Finally, this zig-zag strategy allows "the table" in (68) to be introduced as Theme in (69). Actually, this zig-zag technique is another way of displaying cohesion in this passage, because such a method facilitates the use of newly-built information. Apart from topical Themes, textual elements in thematic position also deserve a particular attention.

Textual Themes

As said earlier, textual Themes are those which are realized by textual elements such as continuative and conjunctive elements. As a matter of fact, text 1 displays the two types of textual Themes. Nevertheless, continuative elements are less predominant. The only case of continuative occurs in (121). Actually, "well" is used by Kunle, the narrator to show that he is aware of the fact that he will help his friends as is being suggested by Abeji. As for conjunctive elements, they are of various types. Indeed, some are used to introduce dependent clauses as in (6, 11, 15, 29, 34, 36, 38, 40, 42), to mention but a few of them. These subordinators are used to link the main clause with dependent clauses and vice versa. Another case of conjunction used in thematic position includes the coordinator "and" used in (9, 20, 24, 28, 69, 104, 123, 125, 133, 140). In addition, "then" is used in (21, 32, 91, 116). Similarly, the coordinator "but" is used in (48, 52,

60, 87, 107, 118). Actually, following Bloor and Bloor (2004), the conjunctions “and/then” are additive, indicating addition and sometimes chronological or logical sequence. As for “but”, it has an adversative function. It is used to indicate a contrast between ideas. In (107) for example, it is introduced by the narrator Kunle to raise Abeji’s awareness on the fact that he will help his friends, nevertheless some conditions must be fulfilled before he can do so. As for the coordinator “so”, it is used only in (40) to indicate a cause-effect type of relation.

In text 2, the continuative element used as Theme occurs only in (56). It is used by Abeji and appears as response to the narrator’s pieces of advice. Conjunctions are mostly used in text 2. They include subordinators, as exemplified in (2, 3, 5, 6, 25, 27, 28, 30, 33, 45, 47, 53) and in other clauses. These elements are used as Themes to bind one clause to another in a hypotactic relationship, i.e., the relationship existing between unequal elements in which one is dominant and the other is dependent and symbolized as α , β , γ , etc. As for coordinators, they are also used abundantly in this text. Some express the relationship of positive addition, like “and” in (13, 23, 28, 44, 55, 58, 72, 92, 123, 125, 127, 129, 132). Others are used to express adversative addition (Halliday, 1985a), like “but” in (21, 38, 42, 52, 69, 123). Similarly, there are conjunctions which express the relationship of variation like “or” in (15, 25, 52). Finally, the conjunctions “so” used in (88, 99) and “hence” in (11) show the relationship of cause-effect, result or purpose. Actually, these conjunctions are used to describe the cohesive ties between clauses or sections of text in such a way as to demonstrate a meaningful relationship between them (Bloor and Bloor, 2004). Other Theme-types which reinforce the message of the writer are the foregrounded ones.

Foregrounding of Themes

As observed by Hasan (1985/1989), the foregrounded element is the one that is highlighted. This paper also focuses on some aspects of highlighted linguistic elements which provide prominence to the message of the text.

The Foregrounding of Topical Themes

The topical elements to be considered here are those that are marked. Actually, in text 1, topical marked Themes are used in (21, 31, 51, 52, 82, 143). In (21), the narrator has shown the reader that he has to get accustomed to the tasks and the people he is not familiar with. In order to achieve this, he uses the topical marked Theme “to familiarize myself with the staff in the ministry” to account for his decision to hold a meeting with the staff. In (31), the narrator does not want to lose his fairness and sincerity towards his people; that is the reason why he thematizes the phrase “showing no disposition to compromise my integrity”. This aims at telling the reader how he is coping with the new administrative managements after his appointment. In (51, 82), complements such as “all” and “all the trouble” are realized as marked Themes. In (51), the narrator uses the complement in such a position to express his gratitude towards his people, whereas in (82), it is used by Abeji to tell the narrator why she thanks Oyin. These are highly marked elements used as foregrounded Themes of the clauses (Halliday, 1985a). In (52), the narrator uses “instead of allowing me to take some rest” in the Thematic position to show how he is pressurized to act in favor of his friends and relatives after he has been appointed State Commissioner. Finally, in (143), Theme is conflated with the circumstantial adjunct “by Ribalians postal service standards” to express not only information about Ribalia, the fictitious country in which the novel is set, but also to convey information about the manner through which he has received a letter.

Moreover, in text 2, the marked Themes occur in (12, 20, 29). In (12), the writer has insisted on the fact that he has prepared his letter of resignation carefully and seriously. This is why he uses the nominalized marked element “after

some amendments to the first draft". Likewise, in (20), he is aware of the fact that in order to free his conscience and avoid losing his integrity, he cannot but resign even though he knows that he will be castigated. By using the marked element "no matter what you did" as Theme and "you couldn't please anybody" as Rheme, one can grasp some aspects of the writer's ideological stance. The last element that is marked occurs in (29) where Abeji is expressing her sympathy towards the writer about his mother's sickness. Actually, the foregrounding of these marked elements allows the reader to find out part of the method of text development. In addition, unusual situations that help to comprehend the text are also emphasized.

The Foregrounding of Interpersonal Themes

As can be noticed from the Theme-table, there are instances of interpersonal Themes in the two texts. The nine (09) interpersonal Themes in text 1 occur in (58, 63, 73, 75, 77, 78, 79, 130, 137). Some of these features are realized by the finite verb in yes/no questions as shown in (58, 63, 75, 77, 78, 79). They mostly display situations where a dialogue is initiated between the narrator and Abeji. This dialogue is reinforced by the polarity adjunct "NO", which stands for an ellipsed clause in (130). Other cases of interpersonal Themes are those realized by modal adjuncts as in (79, 137). In (79) the modal adjunct "not directly" is used to comment on whether the narrator/writer has to pay his friends for organizing a party on his behalf, whereas in (137), it is used to display the writer's attitude towards the fact that the sender of the letter he has received is a man.

Likewise, in text 2, interpersonal elements are realized as Themes in (10, 56, 76, 85, 91, 95, 103, 108, 109, 112, 116, 117). Actually, modal adjuncts are shown in (10, 117). The narrator comments on his mood after having written his letter of resignation in (10) whereas in (117), the presumptive adjunct is used by the writer to comment on Abeji's attitude. Like text 1, this text displays instances of finite verbs realized as interpersonal Themes in (85, 103, 108). Their use gives the text a sense of dialogue. This occurs between the narrator and Abeji. These questions are, at times, followed by yes/no answers as shown by the use of ellipsed clauses in (76, 91, 95, 116). Likewise, there are cases of vocative adjuncts in (56, 109, 112). They are used when Abeji and the writer address each other using a name and other familiar address terms (Eggins, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 2004).

The Foregrounding of the Dependent Clauses as Theme

In the texts under analysis, there are cases of thematically marked Themes in some dependent clauses. Actually, one can notice that the β clause bears the Theme. This case occurs in (40, 48, 102, 112, 114), in text 1 and in (6, 16, 33, 47, 53, 106), in text 2. In text 1, the writer puts dependent clauses in thematic position to provide prominence to some aspects of the development of the plot. In (40), he has shown the reader that he has fulfilled a lot tasks on order to familiarize himself with his new position. In addition, he has emphasized the fact that he has worn out himself doing this work that day. As for (48), the narrator points out that Abeji and himself have been employed in the same school and focuses on where he is when she is employed by the school PTA. Moreover, in (102), Abeji is showing the narrator that he cannot but be pressurized by his friends who want to benefit by his position. They want to be in his good books. In addition, Abeji thinks that the narrator is capable of doing whatever they want because he is the State Commissioner. This is the reason why the latter uses (112, 114) in the thematic position.

In the second text, these dependent clauses are used purposely. Indeed, Kunle wants to specify that in (6), he has been busy preparing a letter before sleeping off. In (16), the narrator wants to be free by resigning his position as State Commissioner. This is why he has written a letter of resignation. He also points out that he is determined to do so even

though the Governor will be offended at reading the letter. In (33), he does not want Abeji to comment on his aunt's sickness, whereas in (47, 53) he is raising Abeji's awareness on the determination to work hard in order to obtain a postgraduate Diploma. Finally, Abeji in (106) is criticizing Kunle because she thinks the latter has forgotten that getting married to her while he is still in office is a great opportunity. They will make copious use of government facilities. For her, if Kunle remembered those advantages, he would not decide to resign his position.

In short, these texts display some features of foregrounding of topical marked Themes, interpersonal Themes, and dependent clauses as Themes. These elements are meant to direct the reader's attention to the organization of the meanings expressed in the selected extracts (Hasan, 1985/1989).

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

From the above analysis, the findings reveal that various types of Themes occur in the selected texts. As suggested by Halliday (1985a), the thematic organization of the clauses express and so reveals, the method of development of the text. In text 1 and text 2, one can notice the predominance of topical Themes. They rank first out of the overall number/percentage of the clauses: [130 (90.27%)] for text1 and [116 (87.87%)]. In these texts, the dominant Theme is the narrator, anaphorically referred to as "I". It is combined with the other topical elements to convey the writer's message. In the two texts, the Rhematic part provides the reader with the new information the writer is giving. In text1, the narrator Kunle, accounts for his first experiences as the State Commissioner at Oke-Aleebu and how he wants to get used to the tasks. He discovers that it will not be easy to get along with his people as he is pressurized by his friends and relatives. They want to take advantage of his position to expect some opportunities from him. In text 2, Kunle has already made up his mind to resign his position. He has written a letter of resignation. However, his decision goes against Abeji's, opinion. For her, his appointment is an opportunity to amass fortune. Textual elements used as Themes are also predominant after topical Themes: [45 (31.25%)] in text 1 and [50 (37.87%)] in text 2; they are mostly conjunctive. Actually, the textual Theme is the point of departure in another sense: it is the deictic element in the clause, that which makes explicit its relation to its environment (Halliday, 2002). These textual elements are the resources used by the writer to create cohesion and coherence in his texts.

From the various analyses, the findings also reveal that there are cases of foregrounded Themes. As said earlier, these are elements which are not obligatory thematic: the writer can use them elsewhere in the clause, so that if they do occur in thematic position, their status as Theme is foregrounded (Halliday, 2002). This study reveals the use of topical marked Themes in the selected texts: [06 (04.16%)] in text1 and [03 (02.27%)] in text 2. They are used to emphasize some aspects the writer's message. In text 1, they point out the seriousness with which the narrator has got started on the work, whereas in text 2, they show the narrator's strategy to get rid of his political position. Likewise, interpersonal elements are foregrounded in the texts: [09 (06.255%)] in text1 and [12 (09.09%)] in text 2. Not only do they display Kunle's attitudes and judgments towards the political events in the office, but they also point out the dialogue occurring between the writer and Abeji. Likewise, dependent clauses as Themes are also foregrounded in the selected extracts: [05 (03.47 %)] in text 1 and [06 (04.54 %)] in text 2. As observed by Eggins (1994), "by positioning the dependent clause first, the writer gives the text a degree of thematic planning not common in spoken language" (p. 319). The use of dependent clauses as Themes shows that the writer has carefully planned his story.

Moreover, these thematic choices have made it easy not only to be aware of how textual meanings are realized but also to know how the Mode dimensions of the context of situation are realized in the excerpts. Actually, on the basis of the

selected texts, it can be inferred that Ogundimu's fiction is written- to- be read or thought over by the reader, with both a monologic and dialogic organization. In addition, formal lexis and standard grammar are mostly noticed in the texts. Moreover, as observed by Eggins (1994), ideology impacts on each of the levels of the context, and through them is realized in linguistic choices, the linguistic evidence from all the preceding analyses can be used to make explicit what positions, biases, and interpretations are encoded in the texts. Indeed, "the impact of ideology on mode relates to how the text encodes such textual meanings as: what information is taken as "given", and what is not; what distance is constructed between reader/writer, and between writer and events, etc" (Eggins, 1994, p.331). In the two texts, one can notice that the information concerning the narrator in the office is mostly taken as "Given" because the writer is drawing the attention of the reader on the events related to his work at the State Secretariat of Ribalia. Viewed from the cultural context (Halliday, 1985a; Eggins, 1994), one can grasp the meaning surrounding this fictional country. In fact, in Yoruba, the word "Riba" means "bribe". So the name Ribalia is used to depict a fictitious bribery country. Therefore, the writer seems to describe real events he has experienced. This is why one can say that *A Silly Season* is a novel which depicts the socio-political realities of our modern time.

On the whole, this paper has attempted to analyze Ogundimu's language through two excerpts from his novel. Aspects of Theme have been studied. They are meant to find out how textual meanings are realized in the texts and constitute one of the linguistic resources that provide texture in the language of the book under study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix: Theme Identification

Theme identification is carried out according to the following keys:

Keys:

Theme is underlined; Textual Theme: in *italics*; Interpersonal Theme: in CAPITALS; Topical unmarked Theme: in **bold**; Topical marked: in ***bold and italics***; Dependent clause as Theme: **whole clause in bold**; Ellipsed topical Theme: in (brackets).

Text 1

1-**It** was the day after the swearing-in ceremony. 2- **A young man from the Ministry of Works** came very early to our Jegede family house. 3- **He** introduced himself as Kayode, my Personal Assistant. 4- **He** was full of life. 5- **He** informed me 6- *that he* had come with my official car and a driver. 7-**I** was pleased about this timely recognition and the prompt attention given my office. 8-**I** donned my business suit 9-*and we* left immediately for Oke-Aleebu, the State Secretariat. 10- **Oke-Aleebu** was hilltop, 11- *where Government presence* was total. 12-**The Governor's office** was the tallest and topmost building on the hill. 13- **The state ministries** were housed in the smaller units clustered around the main structure. 14- **This** was 15-*where decision makers* sat to fashion and release untouchable policies obeyed by the populace. 16- **We** got to the Ministry of works a little before eight O'clock. 17- **I** was introduced to Mrs. Banji, the Permanent Secretary; 18- *she* had been waiting for us at the gate. 19- **She** welcomed 20- *and (she)* conducted me round the offices. 21- *Then, to familiarize myself with the staff in the ministry,* I asked the Permanent Secretary to schedule a staff meeting for ten O'clock. 22- **Most of those who attended the meeting** claimed 23- *they* were delighted to meet me 24- *and (they)* would be happy to work with me. 25- **I** smiled to myself; 26- **I** knew 27- **we** were under a military regime 28- *and they* didn't have a choice, 29- *once the Governor* had appointed me. 30-*However I* assured them of my openness, team spirit, sincerity and willingness to be focused. 31- *Showing no disposition to compromise my integrity,* I urged them to be on the level, 32-*then I* promised to support genuine efforts geared towards improving the lot of our people. 33- *Lastly, I* told them 34- *how much I* would count on their cooperation for a successful tenure. 35- **I** told them 36- *what my working principles* would be. 37- **I** recalled 38- *what the federal and state governments* had been saying about discipline and the need to conform. 39-**They** all applauded. 40- *So, although I was exhausted at the end of the day,* 41- **I**

got back home a happy man, satisfied 42- that the office held a great deal of promise. 43-Abeji was waiting for me. 44-She was a social studies graduate from the University of Palabar. 45-We were products of the same institution. 46- Both of us became teachers at Kajola High School 47-before I took my leave of absence to become a State Commissioner. 48-But, while I was on the payroll of the State Teaching Service Commission, 49-the school PTA was her employer. 50-I thanked her 51-for all she did with our friends the previous day; 52-but instead of allowing me to take some rest she decided to set an agenda for my office. 53-You have to do something for our friends," 54- she insisted. 55-"like what?" 56- I was forced to ask. 57-"Awarding contracts to them for example." 58-"ARE they contractors?" 59-"They are not. 60- But that's one way to help them." 61- "Help..." 62- I stared at her. 63-"ARE they in distress or something?" 64- IS the Ministry of works a cooperative union?" 65-"Remember what they did for us?" 66- "What did I ask anybody to do for me? 67-I got an appointment; 68- I dressed up 69-and (I) reported for inauguration. 70-That's all." 71-"They were all at Oke-Aleebu with us; 72-(you) remember? 73- MORE IMPORTANTLY, they organized a cocktail for you; 74- it takes love, time and money to do such things." 75-"DID I ask anyone to organize party for me? 76-Why did they decide to waste their money?" 77- "ARE you blaming them?" 78-"AM I to pay my friends for organizing a party on my behalf?" 79- "NOT DIRECTLY, but DO you know 80- what Oyin said last night 81- when I thanked her 82- for all the trouble she took?... 83- She said, 84- 'we're all sowing 85- so that we can reap.' 86-Her statement may sound crude 87- but that is the truth. 88-That's the way 89-everybody thinks, 90-including all the people around you". 91-"Then all the people around me are not serious; 92-they must be opportunists." 93-"Call them name 94-if you wish; 95-I know 96-you cannot run away from reality. 97-You must appreciate those 98-who support you 99-by giving them something reasonable". 100- "Don't rush me, Abeji, 101- "I snapped. 102-"Whether I rush you or not, 103-other people will. 104-And that could be worse." 105-"Nobody will rush me. 106- I will assist my friend; 107- but that'll be 108-when I feel 109-that the conditions are ripe and right." 110-"That's idealistic; 111-nobody waits for such conditions. 112-Once you are in post, 113-the conditions are ripe. 114- If you wait, 115-they may never be right." 116-"Then I may never help anyone." 117- "You'll be tagged a jaundiced leader." 118-"But you recognize 119 that I am not one. 120-"I said with finality. 121-"Well, let's stop that for now." 122-She zipped open her shoulder bag 123-and (she) brought out an envelope. 124-"I saw it in your pigeon hole at school 125-and (I) picked it for you." 126-"Thanks." 127-I took the letter. 128-"You know what" 129- she smiled. 130-"YES..." 131-I tried to sound pleasant. 132-"The handwriting looks like a girl's." 133-"And what's wrong in a girl writing to a handsome man like me?" 134-"Not much. 135-I just want to be curious" 136-I tore the envelope open. 137-"UNFORTUNATELY, the sender is a man; 138-he's Mallam Dogo," 139-I remarked. 140-"And, as the post mark shows, 141-it had taken the letter eight full days to come from the capital city!" 142-"You're even lucky. 143-By Ribalian postal service standards, it's a record. 144-A shorter time would have been a deviation from the norm."

Source: *A Silly Season*; pp.15-19

Text 2

1-I did not realize 2- that I had dozed off, 3-until my left hand jerked up to rub my eyes to complete wakefulness. 4-That was 5-when the wall clock struck five O'clock. 6-As I shifted languidly in my seat, 7-I remembered 8-what I was trying to do before sleeping off. 9-I started redrafting the letter all over. 10-LITTLE BY LITTLE, my head appeared relatively de-stressed; 11-hence, the painful words came more easily. 12-After some amendments to the final draft, I read through 13-and (I) smiled to myself; 14- this would please 15-or (this) upset the Governor. 16-If my letter stuck in the Governor's throat, 17-I wasn't going to be bothered. 18-I was ready to offend anybody; 19-the important thing was

to free my conscience. 20-No matter what you did, you couldn't please everybody any way. 21-But at least, you would satisfy your conscience. 22-I came back from the bathroom before six 23-and (I) began to dress. 24-I didn't know how 25-or when Abeji got into our sitting room; 26-Bukky gave her a hint 27-that my aunt was indisposed 28-and that Mother had been away for three days to tend her sister. 29-Sorry about Mama Bukky, said Abeji 30-as she entered my bedroom. 31-It's okay; 32- her health is gradually improving." 33-Before she could speak further on my aunt's health, 34- I quickly changed the topic. "35-How was your trip?" 36-It was okay. 37-I would have called here last night; 38- but I got back very late." 39-How are you coping with your PGD?" 40- "I'm battling with it," 41-she sighed. 42-But things are getting more and more difficult in our universities.43- Already, exams have been fixed for next month 44-and most of us are grumbling 45-because we haven't covered up to one third of the syllabus..." 46-Look, Abeji, 47-if you want a postgraduate Diploma, 48-you have to work for it." 49-That's 50-what I am doing, 51-or am I not?" "52-But you are complaining. 53-If your lecturers can't cover the syllabus, 54-you go ahead 55-and (you) cover them yourself." 56-All right, MR LECTURER, I won't complain." 57-She jumped down on my bed 58-and (she) lay down carelessly. 59- I decided to look elsewhere. 60-Come on," 61-she said, 62-why are you dressing up so early?" 63-I want to get to the office in time." 64-You have a special function or something?" 65-The invitation letter is on my table". 66-Abeji climbed out of my bed eagerly. 67-There is no IV here," 68-she said on getting to the table. 69-But there's a letter there; 70-read it." 71-She sat down playfully picked the draft 72-and (she) began to read. 73-What!" 74-she exclaimed suddenly. 75-You're resigning?" 76-YES." 77-This is impossible," 78-she broke down in tears holding her head with both hands. 79-Why are you doing this to me, Kunle?" 80-Why should you resign? 81-Who has been advising you? 82-Why should anyone push you around? 83-Is that commonsense? 84-Why must you listen to them? 85-DIDN'T we say 86-it was important to have our wedding 87-while you were still in office?" 88-So?" 89-We both agreed 90- that Ribalians were hypocritical?" 91-YES?" 92-And I remarked 93-that they would offer you generous wedding gifts 94- while you were still their immediate boss 95- "INDEED." 96-I even stated 97-that Rabalians would borrow money to please a boss 98-instead of using it to relieve a needy friend."99- "So you did." 100-I described 101-how we would make copious use of government facilities 102-while we also attract gifts from sundry quarters. 103-DID you remember all that?" 104-I did." 105-You didn't; 106-if you did, 107-you wouldn't have decided to quit." 108-SHOULD I be using my position to amass gifts from insincere patrons?" 109-LOOK, if you don't collect gifts from insincere patrons, 110-from who will you collect them? 111-When will you come upon sincere friends? 112-PLEASE note: 113-whatever you put away now is 114-what will remain 115-when you leave office."116- "YES. 117-APPARENTLY, your only interest is the fortune 118-I can make; 119-you did not even ask 120-what led to the letter." 121- "Why should I waste my time asking questions? 122-You have never been realistic. 123-But I won't allow you to submit this letter." 124-She squeezed the draft 125-and (she) stuck it in her bra. 126-I forced my hand into the bra 127-and (I) tried to pull the letter. 128-She gripped my hand 129-and (she) pushed it off in annoyance. 130-You cannot decide for me, Abeji."131- "That's what you think; 132-and that's what we shall see.

Source: *A Silly Season*; pp.109-113